



Public Health
Prevention
& Protection

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES

Len Fishman
Commissioner

Elin A. Gursky, Sc.D.
Senior Assistant Commissioner

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

Vinyl Miniblind Lead Hazard Alert For Local Health Departments

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services - Consumer and Environmental Health Services and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (NJDHSS) are making notice of a potential Lead poisoning hazard from vinyl miniblinds. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced June 25, 1996 that after testing and analyzing imported vinyl miniblinds, they determined that some of these blinds can present a lead poisoning hazard for young children.

This alert addresses the non-glossy, vinyl miniblinds that have lead added to stabilize the plastic in the blinds. They are imported from China, Taiwan, Mexico, and Indonesia. The CPSC found that over time the plastic deteriorates from exposure to sunlight and heat to form lead dust on the surface of the blind. The Arizona and North Carolina Departments of Health and CPSC conducted testing to confirm the hazard. Arizona reported that 63% of miniblind dust samples exceeded the federal limit for lead dust on window sills with readings ranging from 722 ug/sq.ft. to 2,874 ug/sq.ft. They also reported a specific lead poisoning case involving a one-year old exposed to miniblind lead dust at 1,021 ug/sq.ft. and had a blood-lead level of 37 ug/dL. North Carolina found that 45 of the 52 miniblind dust samples exceeded 100 ug/sq.ft., the standard for lead contamination of floor dust. The highest level reported by North Carolina was 66,440 ug/sq.ft. The mean level for all their 52 miniblind dust samples was 4,342 ug/sq.ft. North Carolina also reported that 79% of the miniblinds tested exceeded 0.5% by weight, with the highest concentration slightly above 2.0%. The CPSC recommends that consumers remove these vinyl miniblinds in homes where children under age 6 may be present.

Young children can ingest lead by wiping their hands on the blinds and then putting their hands in their mouths. Washing children's hands frequently will help reduce a child's exposure to lead. Lead poisoning in children is associated with behavioral problems, learning disabilities, hearing problems, and growth retardation. Children under age 6, particularly those less than 2 years, who have been exposed to these miniblinds should be screened for lead poisoning.

The N.J. Department of Health and Senior Services is recommending the following steps to reduce any lead dust hazard associated with the vinyl miniblinds. The vinyl miniblinds should be removed intact and placed in heavy duty plastic bags for disposal. Persons should wash hands thoroughly after handling the miniblinds. Prior to disposal, consumers may wish to contact the store where blinds were purchased or the manufacturer for any recall, exchange, or refund information. Areas near windows that used the vinyl miniblinds should be cleaned. Cleaning can be accomplished by using a cloth dampened with warm water containing dishwashing detergent or all-purpose cleaner to clean windows and any non-carpeted floor near the window. The window sill and frame should be cleaned including the inside area of the window when it is open, followed by the floor and moldings near the window. Cleaning cloths should be disposed of in plastic bags. The preferred way of cleaning carpets is by using steam or other wet method. The potential of lead exposure from miniblinds should be considered as part of an environmental investigation.

The CPSC asked the Window Covering Safety Council representing the industry to no longer produce vinyl miniblinds containing lead. The manufacturers have made the change and new miniblinds without added lead should have appeared on store shelves beginning around July 1 and should become widely available over the next 90 days.

For more information from the CPSC, call 1-800-638-2772. For other questions, call NJDHSS-Consumer and Environmental Health Services at 609-984-2193 or Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention at 609-292-5666.